

physician-supported interventions that restrict emotion.

After painting this alarmist picture of our posthuman future, Fukuyama strikes a more positive tone in the last quarter of the book. He argues that the hazards he has presented can be averted by creating national and international regulation that limit the development and use of biotechnology.

Gazing into a biotechnological future that is very uncertain, this book provides a fascinating framework for exploring the possibilities that await us. Although many of Fukuyama's propositions are controversial — such as his often unrelenting attack on medicine and, more specifically, psychiatry — he should be applauded for attempting to move us beyond everyday talk of ethics to a deeper examination of human nature and its natural limits. *Our Posthuman Future* is an engaging, expansive and well referenced stimulus for discussion among health professionals, policy-makers and the general public. Fukuyama challenges the reader to follow Nietzsche's philosophical ideal by becoming aware of society's chosen goals and values, so that we may move forward with our eyes open.

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Entrée côté cœur

On dit parfois que la poésie, c'est ce qui disparaît dans la traduction. De même, les jeux de mots se traduisent rarement. Au fil des ans, le titre «De l'oreille gauche» — jeu de mot sur «oreillette» — a suscité tant de perplexité chez les lecteurs que notre service de traduction a voulu nous proposer une autre solution. Ainsi, que vous préféreriez à la scène le côté cour ou le côté jardin, nous vous invitons à être des nôtres alors que nous fixerons les projecteurs côté cœur.

Lifeworks

Flaunting it

Writing in *Harper's* magazine, Edward Hoagland recently recalled the experience of watching circus performers doing "things they shouldn't reasonably do, with no ostensible purpose but showing off."¹ With total confidence they would perform impossible feats that shocked and amazed, and the shameless flaunting of their physical disfigurements transformed them into figures of pure spectacle. Hoagland gawked without guilt at these almost inhuman figures who, in the same day, against all conceivable reason, "were said to have bought cough medicine, underpants, and other personal stuff in the local stores." Thus, circus performers simultaneously participated in the mundane world and in total fantasy.

In *Step Right This Way*, the first museum exhibition of Edward J. Kelty's photographs of travelling circus performers (presented at the International

Center of Photography in New York from Sept. 13 to Dec. 1, 2002), we witness images that both praise the performers for their audacity and strip away a little of their mystery.

The 46 photographs that were included in this show are a mere handful of the circus photos found in Kelty's apartment after his death in 1967. Kelty was never a hugely successful photographer. He had a commercial studio in Manhattan in the 1920s and 30s. What made him unique was his use of a large-format banquet camera and his interest in photographing circus people. During the summer, in a truck that he had outfitted with a darkroom and sleeping area, he would follow small circuses as they crisscrossed the country. With his enormous camera, he was able to produce negatives up to 12" × 20" — ideal for registering the minute detail necessary for images in which he arranged groups of up to a thousand people. By the time the 1940s rolled around many of these small circuses began to disappear, and Kelty moved to Chicago, where he abandoned photography altogether.

The discovery of these photos does more than provide a document of the mysterious lost world of the travelling circus. Kelty's photographs were clearly a labour of love. They demonstrate a sensitivity and fondness for the unconventional way of life of circus performers. These circuses were built on the showmanship of the bizarre. The more unusual the feat or physical deformity, the more awe-inspiring and enticing the spectacle. Along with daredevils, dwarfs and giants were other side-show attractions, such as "The Alligator Man," who suffered from ichthyosis, a disfiguring affliction of the skin. While many other photographers at the time exploited people with rare conditions for personal gain, Kelty demonstrated respect for his subjects. His photographs are of people who convey not only ac-



Courtesy International Center of Photography, New York, NY

Edward J. Kelty, 1928. X-ray of Ajax, "The Swords-wallower."

ceptance of their physical abnormalities but a kind of pride, an open flaunting, that might be almost incomprehensible to others. In two separate photos entitled *Congress of Freaks*, Kelty arranged large numbers of circus performers in rows, each clearly visible and showcasing their unique features in full costume: the hirsute or morbidly obese lady, the contortionist, the albino, the dwarf. These photographs go beyond accepting the bizarre as normal; translating physical oddity into spectacle, they exalt it.

With his respectful gaze Kelty was sometimes able to pull his subjects from their fantastical existence and return them to a more understandable world. His large arrangements of circus workers — standing in rows, shortest in front to tallest in back, smiling broadly — are reminiscent of family reunions, wedding parties and school photos. These are poses we have all held at one time or another. On the other hand, other photographs accentuate the extraordinary by eliminating the possibility of forgery or hoax. One photograph shows the x-ray image of a sword-swallower, the handle of the sword hovering above the skull, the blade penetrating deeply through the mouth and throat, and well into the chest. This is a remarkable authentication. It is almost easier to denounce the performer as inhuman than to attempt to believe that any of us might be capable of such a feat.

In front of a world where complying with uniformity was expected, circus performers flaunted their uniqueness. In front of audiences that stared with a combination of envy and disapproval, they banded together to create moments of wonder. These visions may have disappeared, but Kelty's images renew our belief in a lost world of the imagination.

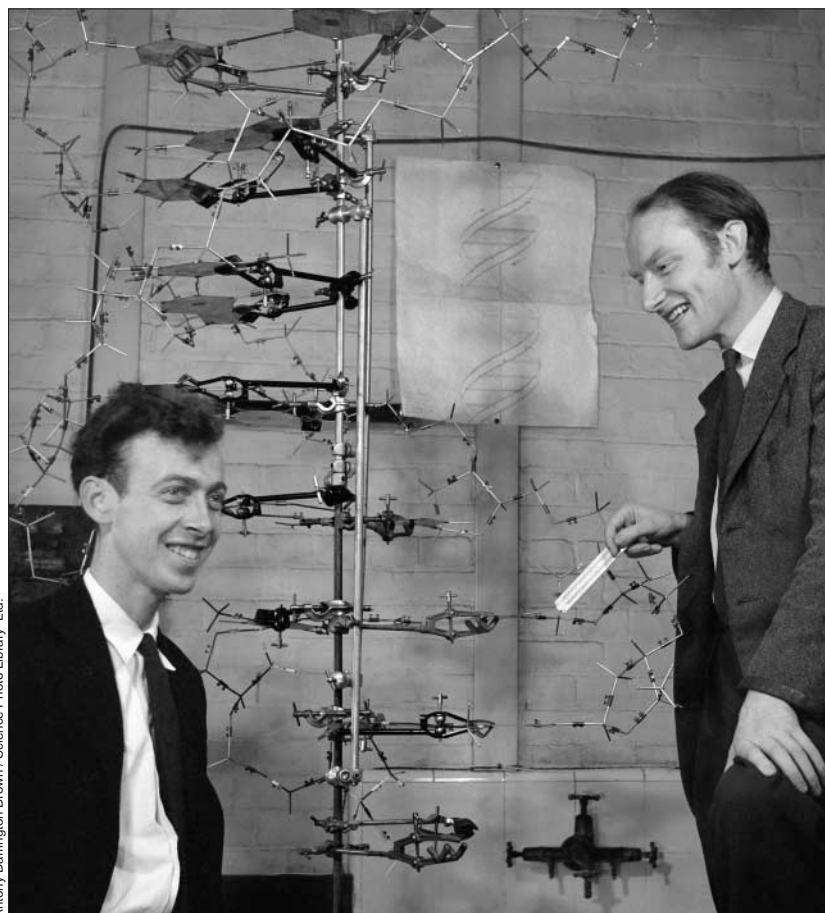
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Reference

1. Hoagland E. Circus music: for clowns, lions, and solo trapeze. *Harper's* 2002;304(1821):31-8.

One thousand words



"We've got this model." Antony Barrington Brown, erstwhile student of chemistry at Cambridge University, was working as a campus photographer and a stringer for the national press in May 1953 when a friend asked him to take a picture for a story he hoped to sell to the *Times*. Apparently an important discovery had been made at Cavendish Laboratory. Barrington Brown set off on his bicycle, towing his tripod and lights to the research quarters of Francis Crick (right), a 36-year-old Englishman, and James Watson, a 24-year-old American who had been working with Crick since 1951. Barrington Brown recalls: "I was affably greeted by a couple of chaps loungeing at a desk by the window, drinking coffee. 'What's this all about?' I asked. With an airy wave of the hand one of them, Crick I think, said 'we've got this model' indicating an array of retort stands holding thin brass rods and balls. ... [I]t meant absolutely nothing to me ... I set up my lights and camera and said 'you'd better stand by it and look portentous' which they lamentably failed to do." The *Times* never used the story or the photos, although *Vogue* took Watson's picture for a feature a year later. Watson and Crick's letter proposing "A Structure for Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid" was published in *Nature* on April 25, 1953. They flipped a coin to decide whose name would appear first. The same issue contained papers by Maurice Wilkins, who shared the Nobel Prize with Watson and Crick in 1962, and by Rosalind Franklin, whose crystallographic images of DNA, without her knowledge, paved the way to Watson's realization that the molecule was double-stranded. Franklin died four years before the Prize was awarded. Limited-edition prints of Barrington Brown's photograph and an anniversary poster are available from Science Photo Library Ltd. at www.sciencephotogallery.com — CMAJ